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Extension work.

Extension Service Circular 83

July, 1928

Some Extension Administrative Problems

C.B. Smith

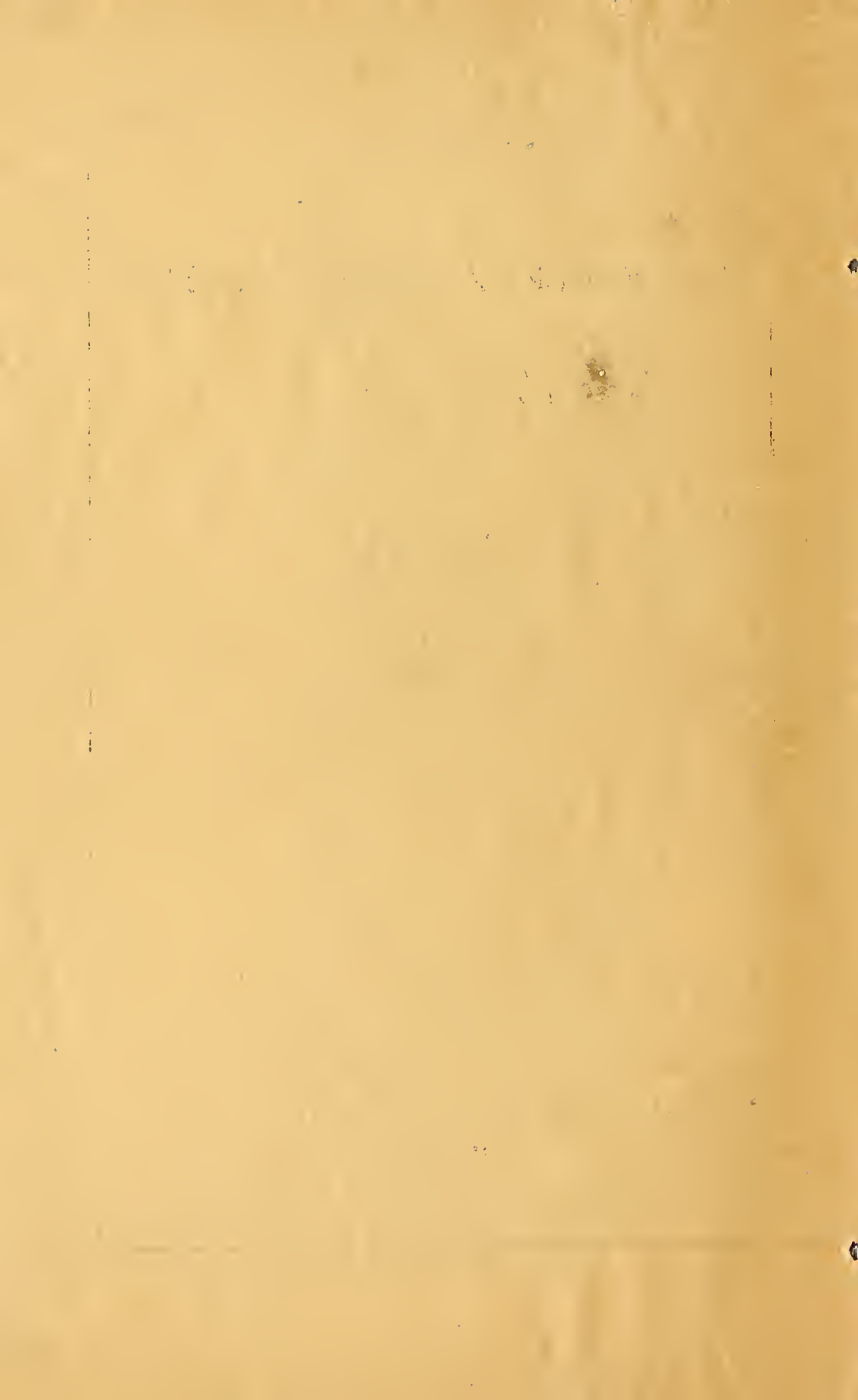


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Extension Service.....C.W. WARBURTON *Director*

Office of Cooperative Extension Work.....C.B. SMITH *Chief*

Washington, D. C.



JUL 16 1928

EXPERIMENT STATION FILE

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

Extension Service Circular 83

July, 1928

SOME EXTENSION ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS*

C. B. Smith,
Chief, Office of Cooperative Extension Work

We are meeting with some success in our extension work. More than 70 per cent of the farm people are aggressively in favor of it. Congress has recognized this success and given us increased funds for its further development. More than 150 organizations of farmers and farm women and others expressed themselves to Congress as favoring this increase. We are gratified with these expressions of confidence and good will. Nevertheless, no one knows better than ourselves that our present state has been arrived at after much stumbling, and that still larger opportunity is before us for increased helpfulness to the farmer and his family.

Take the country as a whole. We have been doing the immediate, the obvious things, and the things we have known best how to do. We have heard the call of the farmer for better markets, better prices, better organization, but have not functioned strongly in this phase of our work because our background of training and fact in these fields has been limited. Our research departments in economics, both of the land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture, are young. It is only recently that we have felt the growing strength of these departments under the stimulus of the Purnell Act in the States and the accumulating results of researches of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the Federal Department of Agriculture.

We now see how feeble the effect of all our demonstrations may be if we let the farmer produce just a little in excess of what the world needs of any particular commodity. How many millions the farmer may lose this year if we let him overproduce in potatoes and barley, as Federal forecasts indicate he intends to do. Just a little failure on our part to lay this significant information before the farmer at the right time may cause him to lose more than he gains from all our work in the whole field of extension for the rest of the year valuable as that work is.

*Address delivered at Central States Extension Conference, State College of Agriculture, Urbana, Ill., May 22 to 24, 1928.

DISTRIBUTION: One copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director, State supervisor, and agricultural college and experiment station library in all States, and to each county agricultural and home demonstration agent in the Central States.

That is why we have felt justified during the last year or two in urging the development of strong research, teaching, and extension departments in agricultural economics in all the States. We now have the economic information we did not have 10 years ago. We are now in position to give the farmer the help along these lines he has been asking for from the outset. Our researches in economics, both of the States and Federal Government, are daily increasing our knowledge in these fields. It would seem that the time is here when we are ready to go forward strongly and confidently in the extension of economic information on a considerably larger scale than in the past and that by so doing we will in greatly increased measure give help to the farmer and his family.

It would seem that we should have at least one extension economist in every extension service and that every subject-matter specialist in every extension service should extend the economics of his subject along with the technique of production. The agricultural outlook now annually published by the Federal Department of Agriculture and by most States, supplemented by the intentions to plant and breed, is the most significant thing that has come into agricultural extension in the last 10 years as a means of helping the farmer, and we have a tremendous task to teach farmer's faith in and intelligent use of these data in the next 10 years. But, if we do it, we will have gone a long way in helping solve the agricultural problem. In this work we get at the root of the matter.

We have been doing a good deal lately in the development of agricultural programs, State, county, and community, but we need to do more. Every county should have a county agricultural program that should set goals and indicate the part to be taken in that program by farmers, bankers, merchants, and others.

Recently, complaint was made to me by a county agent that the five Smith-Hughes teachers in the county had gotten out a county agricultural program without consulting him. A published agricultural program for one of the counties in Mississippi, prepared by the Smith-Hughes teacher and assigning the county agent parts to take in the program without consulting the county agent, recently came to my desk.

Whose job is it to develop with the farmers an agricultural program for the county? Anyone may study what the agriculture of a county, as developed by the farmers living there, is; but we hold it peculiarly the job of the agricultural college, with its background of research and corps of technical workers, reenforced by the research work and technical staff of the Federal Department of Agriculture and aided by the county agents on the job, to take the lead in this work. But, if we do not lead in such county program building, we leave an opening for some one else to come in and undertake the work.

Now, the county program that the extension forces build will be better than the county program anyone else builds and will command respect and following in proportion as such extension program is based on facts. Hence, more than ever do we see the need, not only of national and State

data in county program building, but also farm data based on accurate records kept within the county, such as our farm management demonstrators are getting. Every county agent everywhere should have 25 to 30 accurate farm records in his county every year. The extension forces have the facts. They have the trained technical staff; it is their job; they should lead in the development of a county agricultural program.

In the development of that program, however, the extension forces should not make the mistake of failing to invite into the program-building conference the Smith-Hughes teachers. We should remember that they are our coordinates and equals, trained by the same professors at the same institutions, interested in the same farm families and in the same problems, and, like ourselves, appreciate the opportunity of taking part in matters that are in the making rather than taking something handed out to them when the party is over.

The ideal is where both extension and vocational teaching forces unite with the farmers, bankers, and merchants in developing a county agricultural program that will show just what shall be done in the way of extension work and what shall be taught through the schools. Perhaps some day we will have a county agricultural board in each county that will help determine these matters. We need such a board.

Briefly summed up, we would leave in your minds the need, as we see it, of more economic information for the farmer, an intensification of our work along this line, more county and community programs, with extension forces leading in this field, and closer cooperation with Smith-Hughes teachers in building such programs.

We are not unmindful of the fact that Congress has given us increased funds for extension work--that increase being for the primary purpose of strengthening our work with the home and with young people. May we say a word at this time with reference to the home end of the job? Eighty per cent of the new funds appropriated are for work in counties--county agents, men and women. Two factors have worked against the development in these Central States of home demonstration agents--the lukewarmness of farm women themselves, and the opposition of county agricultural agents. The attitude of many farm women who do not know the work is in considerable degree a repetition of the attitude of farm men toward agricultural colleges when they were first established in the early sixties and seventies. The lukewarmness of the farm women disappears when they come into actual contact with home demonstration work and take part in it.

Too often the home life of the farm woman is a grind, unrelieved by adequate social life, recreation, or opportunity for reading and intellectual and spiritual development. The finest homes are not developed under such circumstances. This situation can be remedied. The home demonstration agent within the county who calls women together in groups for demonstration, lecture, play, social activity, the consideration of community problems, the practice of parliamentary procedure, short courses at the agricultural college, and a week in camp, is developing a new farm woman and enriching the whole family life. We need more of this work, and it is presumed a substantial part of the new funds provided by Congress will be used in this field.

The opposition of county agricultural agents to the placing of home demonstration agents in counties seems to be based on the theory that it is difficult enough now to finance the work of the one agricultural agent with anywhere nearly an adequate salary and that it is unwise to jeopardize his own work by bringing in another agent. In some places this is a real situation and should be met squarely.

I think the situation would be greatly eased if the extension service in each State would undertake to pay the entire salary of the home demonstration agent in each county wholly from Federal and State funds. There are not so many home demonstration agents in most States but that this could be done now with the new funds soon to be made available without serious embarrassment to the college and might constitute a permanent future policy.

Such a policy is a justifiable one in a new and little understood work; but a work as meaningful to future rural life, in the judgment of the speaker, as is the work for increased income. What does it profit a man if his income multiplies a hundredfold if he fails to have a satisfying home.

Such a policy would remove, or make invalid, the present objection of county agricultural agents in some counties to the bringing in of home demonstration agents for fear there might not be finances for both agents and would establish the precedent, which I understand we practically all believe in, of eventually paying the entire salary of every county agent of every kind wholly from Federal and State funds. Such agents are primarily teachers of the college of agriculture and should be paid as other teachers of that institution are paid--wholly by the college.

In connection with our forestry extension, we would like to call your attention to the thought that when the Clarke-McNary forestry bill was passed it was expected that all its provisions would be administered by the Forest Service and the State departments of forestry. After very careful consideration of the whole matter, however, and against the protests of the State forester, the administration of Section 5 of the act dealing with extension was placed by the Secretary of Agriculture in the Extension Service of the Department and the land-grant colleges. The act contemplates a final fund of \$100,000 from Federal sources for this work. There has been a demand from the States thus far for only about \$60,000. We feel that if the extension services of the department and colleges are to administer and direct this work we are morally bound to see that the funds provided in the act for extension are all used and used effectively. It is our earnest hope that such stimulation of forestry extension may follow as a result of this conference as will make impossible any criticism by outside forces of our handling of this work. To my mind each State is under some little obligation to use its share of this fund at the earliest opportunity, but whether it does or not, it is obligated to do the work.

Our survey studies in some 15 States, extending over a period of four years, in which we have obtained data on more than 10,000 farms and farm homes and traced back to their sources the reasons for more than 25,000 changed practices, have shown us that the big new thing that has come into

extension work in the last 20 years is the technically-trained, rural-minded, sympathetic extension agent, located permanently in the counties where he may be seen and personally consulted, and in whom farmers have faith. This contact with and this trust of the farmers and their families in the county agent and home demonstration agent seem to be the largest factors in getting things done in the whole field of extension.

This leads me to a brief consideration of the county agents themselves. If he or she is the significant factor in extension, as our surveys lead us to believe, how important that we make it possible for them to maintain that leadership and even to grow wiser and stronger with the years. To this end, we must make their job a possible one to adhere to as a profession for life--the hours of work must be possible hours, not forever 14 to 16 hours a day. That may be necessary in the beginning of a new work, but surely not when that work has once established itself. It should be mostly day work, with a minimum of night hours. Sabbatic leave of some sort for professional advancement is essential.

Even the Master felt the exhausting effort of constantly giving and the cry of the multitudes forever after Him and sought rejuvenation in the wilderness and the solitudes of the mountains. The county agent must likewise refresh himself from time to time in the seats of learning and he must likewise have the satisfaction of feeling himself the real child of the institution he represents. His task of teaching the multitudes outside the college walls is as great, as delicate, and as significant as is the teaching within those walls.

With increasingly competent farm men and women on the farms, with higher standards of living and social life, with larger rural undertakings by fewer rural people, larger and larger demands will be made on the extension agents, and only agents who keep abreast of the times will find place in the extension system. We must give our agents opportunity and encouragement to prepare themselves for this increasingly higher service.

And then, the returns must be such as will give the extension agent and his family some assurance that old age may be provided for in a reasonable way. A retirement fund for the extension employees of the State who give the best of their lives to its service is in accordance with modern ideas of fairness and justice in business and industry and should be equally a normal part of the great business of extension.

I repeat, if we are going to get and hold the ablest men and women in extension, we must provide conditions so attractive that they will be willing to make it a life job. They, like the farmer, must find satisfaction in the work if they are to stay in it.

They are now an unorganized and detached group. I can conceive as their numbers increase that they will soon want the satisfaction of an organization of their own, designed for professional improvement. We have a national educational association that concerns itself with education within school walls. Ours is an educational program for those outside school walls and is growing in importance as our ideas of education expand and we find that man is quite capable of learning up to the end of life.

In this association of all extension forces, county agents, home demonstration agents, specialists, supervisors, and directors, meeting annually or every other year at their own expense, I can conceive that extension forces may ask to join them in some form or other the 200,000 local leaders who constitute a substantial portion of the ablest farm men and women in America. This whole group might be profited and inspired by a professional journal, circulating among the members, which would contain articles on methods, results, professional improvement, and inspiration. I can conceive that there might be State and even county branches of this association, the county group made up of the county extension agents, and the local leaders who make their extension work in the counties effective. A banquet and program attended by all these forces, meeting together in the county once or twice a year, would add much to extension morale and efficiency and would seem to be an inevitable part of the future of extension.

I would leave in your minds these things:

- (1) More extension work in the field of economics.
- (2) An agricultural program in every county, with extension forces leading in its development.
- (3) Begin financing the entire salary of every home demonstration agent from college and Federal funds now.
- (4) Make our forestry extension work so effective that there can be no criticism of it.

It is our privilege and duty to work for sabbatic leave for our extension employees, obtain for them retirement privileges, guide and encourage their organization into a professional group, served by a high-class journal dealing with methods, inspiration, results, and professional improvement.

Supplementary statement regarding club work

We must give heed to the wishes of the Congress as expressed in the committees of the House and the Senate regarding club work. They made it plain that they expected the work with boys and girls to be increased materially with the funds appropriated under the Capper-Ketcham Act. We are now enrolling approximately 618,000 boys and girls. When we go back to the Congress for more funds, the committees will want to know what the increase in the club enrollment has been as a result of the moneys already appropriated. It is not a question of whether the additional agents shall be county club agent, assistant county agent, or assistant home demonstration agent. If we are to receive additional appropriations for extension work in later years, we must be able to show that we have kept the faith with Congress. Increased club work should result from the use of the Capper-Ketcham funds.

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